riportare altre indicazioni bibliografiche. Di un libro intitolato *The Merging of Spirit and Science* non vi è traccia né su Worldcat né sui cataloghi on line delle maggiori biblioteche universitarie (Harvard, Yale, Library of Congress, U of Toronto, OPAC SBN). La frase citata da Rossini è, sì, di Albert Einstein, ma viene da un libro intitolato *Living Philosophies* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931, p.6).

In uno studio così riccamente dettagliato e nel quale il discorso sull'allusività risulta doviziosamente esposto, si percepisce come un vuoto la mancanza di un indice che consenta al lettore di ricercare e tracciare il viaggio dei termini chiave impiegati e spiegati nel libro. Forse si potrà anche sollevare la questione della rilevanza di certi autori come Ruperto di Deutz, Brunone di Asti (pp. 74-75), Martino di Lione, Pietro Cellense (pp. 76-78) o Radberto Pascasio (p. 120) per l'ermeneutica dantesca, ma qui si potrà rispondere, con le stesse parole opportunamente offerte dall'autore nei 'Prolegomeni necessari', che l'ampia diffusione dei testi di quegli autori, anche se non si può provare neppure su base indiziaria che Dante li avesse letti, contribuisce alla formazione di una costellazione semantica che informava il contesto scritturale di ambito escatologico presente al poeta della *Commedia*. A questo aspetto, dunque, si collega anche la maggiore novità di *Dante, il nodo e il volume*, cioè la rivalutazione dell'*Apocalisse* di Giovanni come punto di riferimento costante della scrittura del *Paradiso* dantesco. Il libro di Rossini rappresenta un contributo utile per orientarsi nella selva semantica del linguaggio patristico impiegato nel *Paradiso* e metterne a fuoco la polisemia e la ricchezza poetiche.

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***Marriage in Premodern Europe: Italy and Beyond.* Edited by Jacqueline Murray. Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2012. Pp. 393. ISBN 078-0-7727-2122-8. \$ 32.**

Notable marriages of Renaissance Italy, Flanders, England and Scotland are reviewed in this collection of scholarly essays. Negotiations, diplomacy, endogamous and exogamous marriages, rituals and celebrations, reflect attitudes concerned with power, privilege and wealth. Some outstanding marriages or their extraordinary aspects will be highlighted, as the book contains numerous articles. "The Queen's Marriage: Matrimonial Politics in Pre-Modern Europe," details specific diplomatic considerations required for negotiating the marriage of a sovereign particularly, a female one. An endogamous union could help a queen consolidate power. While expanding the kingdom, it could potentially unite the opposing claimants to the throne. Withal there was always danger that jealousy among noble houses in the realm would fuel destabilization in the kingdom.

While an exogamous marriage held potential for gain, additional wealth, territory, and security, a foreign consort might not always be a welcome figure to court or populace. Objections to newcomers often fanned the fires of rebellion. Pre-nuptial negotiations for sovereigns were thus imperative so that inheritance

issues be clearly delineated, especially with regard to the succession. A master of politics in marital negotiations, Elizabeth I of England successfully steered her own course, preferring to remain single. Elizabeth, an ever cautious monarch, never jeopardized her hold on the throne, but dallied with many marital prospects as diplomatic insurance.

The most famous prenuptial agreements of the renaissance were those drawn between Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castile. These agreements provided for political unity and an enduring, successful partnership.

In “‘Personal’ Rituals: The Office of Ceremonies and Papal Weddings, 1483-1521,” we learn of ceremonial preferences and customs for the marriages of papal families. Ceremonies confer dignity, value and legitimacy on events. As ritual was useful for the political fortunes of the papacy, the Office of Ceremonies was involved in all matters that related to the pope, even familial celebrations. Such celebrations occurred outside the bounds of papal ceremonial canon codified in 1488, which did not include provision for marriages of papal kin, but they reveal an acceptance by pope and papal court of the political demands of leadership.

In Italy, a *sponsalia* or solemnization of nuptial vows was the first official recognition of a marriage. It functioned as betrothal and/or nuptial contract. It was typically followed by a banquet or a reception with refreshments. Relatives of a pope would naturally wish to hold it at the papal palace, requiring scrutiny and strategic involvement by the Office of Ceremonies.

To renege on a *sponsalia* in order to seek greater gain became the *modus operandi* of Federico Gonzaga. In “The Compromise Bride: The Marriage of Federico II Gonzaga and Margherita Paleologa of Monferrato,” arrangements between Maria Paleologa, aged 6, and Federico, aged 14, were annulled years later, after Federico changed his mind. Political developments between France and Spain had opened richer possibilities for him. Federico sought a new bride from Charles V and received Giulia of Aragon. He further obtained that in the event Giulia should produce no male heir, his bastard son be named legal heir.

In the meantime, at the demise of the male heir, the Duke of Monferrato designated his duchy as a *feudo femminile*, bestowing it upon Maria Paleologa. Federico now saw the opportunity to attach another kingdom whereas former arrangements only offered political gain. He reversed his promise to marry Giulia of Aragon, and asked the pope for a repeal of the earlier annulment between himself and Maria Paleologa. Maria died en route to the Gonzaga Palace; undeterred, Federico married her younger sister, Margherita.

Maddalena della Gazzia offers an extreme case of self-will as described in “Since she was determined to have him for her husband: A Siennese woman Who Chose for Herself.” Maddalena flouted convention and chose to marry a Spanish soldier from the occupying army as her spouse. She deliberately went outside the norm that maintained endogamous marriage in class and politics to forge her own future.

In renaissance Genoa women were authorized to perform administrative duties as notarial records show. They were appointed guardians of children while men were away from home. As keepers of the household, many managerial decisions were in their hands. Similarly, in Flanders, the town of Ghent’s records show

that marriage gradually became more practical between patrician and burgher families. Procuring financial gain caused exogamous marriage to occur between the classes. Women and men in Ghent inherited equally and there were no laws excluding married women from controlling property. Reported cases show that women took administrative matters in hand seriously and capably.

The Carnegies of Scotland used endogamous marriages to consolidate their position among neighbors and kin. The senior member of the clan did the negotiating. Extant records show that Carnegie patriarchs with legal experience used it to advantage to draw up marital contracts. Following the practice of endogamous marriage over many years helped the Carnegies accrue honors and wealth much more easily than by marrying out.

One curious case study examines the two marriages of Anne Wentworth, Englishwoman and mystic. A pious albeit battered wife, Anne claimed to receive mystical communication from Jesus, with whom she united in a spiritual union or marriage. Apparently, even in spiritual union, Anne received abusive treatment. Wentworth believed that spiritual marriage served as her commissioning as prophet. The publications that Wentworth left give personal and public accounts of life and salvation.

This book as a whole provides research and case histories gleaned from archival records of the renaissance period. Moving through the period's centuries and from one country to the next, one gathers understandings of the social and political structures which regulated people's lives. A quilt-like ensemble, one follows specific historical accounts of the transfer of property, goods and persons in marital unions. Replete with bibliographies, genealogical charts, artistic reproductions and index, it is a comprehensive and informative work.

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Giovan Francesco Straparola. *The Pleasant Nights. Volume 1.* Edited with an Introduction by Donald Beecher. Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2012. Pp.764. ISBN 9781442644267. \$ 110.

Con questo lavoro il professor Beecher ci restituisce l'edizione in inglese rivista e corretta del primo volume delle *Piacevoli Notti*, antologia di brevi racconti, novelle ricche di facezie, favole popolari raccolti da Giovan Francesco Straparola (c. 1480-c. 1557) e pubblicati a Venezia in due libri, il primo uscito nel 1550 contenente 25 storie e il secondo nel 1553 con 48 storie, per un totale di 73, poi ampliate fino a 75 nell'edizione definitiva. Beecher premette all'edizione un'ampia (136 pagine) e dettagliata introduzione in cui fornisce importanti informazioni su Straparola, sulla sua opera e sul genere favolistico organizzando il discorso in sette sottosezioni: I. la biografia di Straparola ("The Straparola Dilemma, or the Biography of an Invisible Author"); II. l'origine e la struttura dell'opera ("The Genre, Design, and Conventions of *Le piacevoli notti*"); III. il contesto culturale alla base dell'opera ("Polite Society and the Gaming Culture of Renaissance Italy");